



JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

The newsletter of the National Christian Council in Japan

ISSN 0021-4353

Number 734

Spring/Summer 2003

Double Issue

NCCJ 35th General Assembly

War on Iraq - Christians in Japan Respond

EDITORIAL

I bring greetings to the readers of JCAN, and thank you all for your continued support and prayers.

We are in transition, not only at NCCJ but in our world, as we continue to strive for ways we can bring peace. We are standing at the crossroads of two choices, whether we choose life and create a culture of peace and reconciliation or we chose the road of destruction and spread a culture of violence and war. Before the war in Iraq began, NCCJ was active in protesting and questioning the war, as you will see by just some of the many statements inside this issue. Now we are continuing our efforts to work for peace and seek for ways we can uphold Japan's Peace Constitution, especially in light of the nationalism and increasing militarism of today. God has told us that "thou shall not kill" and Jesus said in the Garden of Gethsemane when he was about to be arrested, to one of his disciples who had drawn his sword, "put away your sword, for all who take the sword will die by the sword." Let us continue to find peaceful ways to rid the world of war and violence and work for peace.

Toshi Yamamoto

General Secretary, NCCJ



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NCCJ 35th General Assembly

March 10-11, 2003

Toward Peace and Reconciliation - Overcoming Violence

The 35th General Assembly of the National Christian Council in Japan was held on March 10 and 11 at Tokyo Lutheran Church. The theme, "Toward Peace and Reconciliation - Overcoming Violence" was particularly appropriate in light of the looming US/UK attack on Iraq. Rev. Reiko Suzuki was re-elected as Moderator and Rev. Toshimasa Yamamoto was confirmed as the new General Secretary to replace Rev. Kenichi Otsu, who stepped down after nine years of service.

The first day of the Assembly began with an opening worship service that included a sermon by Vice-Moderator Rev. Renta Nishihara. The 87 delegates from NCCJ's member churches and organizations then heard a greeting from Dr. Ahn Jae Woong, General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), and a message from Rev. Dr. Konrad Raiser, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC; see p. 4) was read.

The morning was taken up with reports from the Moderator and outgoing General Secretary, as well as the election of officers. Ms. Reiko Suzuki and Rev. Renta Nishihara were re-elected as moderator and vice-moderator respectively, and Rev. Han Song Hyon of the Korean Christian Church in Japan was newly elected to join them as the other vice-moderator. Rev. Masayuki Hiraoka of the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church and Rev. Koto Masuda of the United Church of Christ in Japan were chosen as secretaries.

The afternoon consisted of committee reports. Rather than each report being debated separately, Rev. Jintaro Ueda posed questions and opinions on behalf of the Assembly, which were answered by the executive secretary of each committee. During the afternoon, Rev. Mitsuo Ishii and Professor Hideo Yuki of the NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions appealed to delegates on behalf of the Center, which is facing a financial crisis. Mr. Shirakawa of the Christian Literature Center also appealed for del-

egates' cooperation and support.

Rev. Toshimasa Yamamoto was confirmed as the new General Secretary effective April 1. Rev. Yamamoto, a missionary of the United Methodist Church in the USA, has been working for the past ten years as the NCCJ's Executive Secretary for International Affairs. This will be the first time the NCCJ has been headed by a missionary, a status Rev. Yamamoto has decided to retain only after much consideration. The Assembly was unanimous in its expressions of support.

Moderator Suzuki thanked Rev. Otsu for his nine years of service to NCCJ. In addition to his contribution as General Secretary, she reminded the Assembly, he had also played an active role in the WCC and CCA, and gained the trust of other religious leaders and citizens' groups in building up peace networks.

A panel discussion was then held on the theme "Japan viewed from Asia - the hopes placed on NCCJ." It was chaired by former NCCJ moderator Rev. Kano Yoshitaka. Dr. Ahn Jae Woong and Rev. Paik Do-Woong (General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in Korea [NCCCK]) gave presentations, and Ms. Suzuki responded.

Dr. Woong spoke about the ecumenical movement as "perhaps the greatest achievement in church history since the Reformation," and called on Japan to let go of its dependence on the West in favor of increased dialogue with its Asian neighbors. (See p. 5 for the full text of his presentation.) He expressed the hope that NCCJ will continue to build on the reputation, trust, authority and morality it has already achieved within Asia, dialogue with and assist churches in other Asian



countries, and become a central player in the worldwide ecumenical movement.

Rev. Paik said that NCCJ emphasizes reconciliation and peace, in the same way as its Japanese neighbor. He spoke of the importance of solidarity between Japan, Korea, and Taiwan, and proposed a joint consultation. He also called for the nurturing of future ecumenical leaders and for strengthened inter-religious dialogue within Japan and Korea. In response, some delegates expressed the opinion that China, rather than Taiwan, should be included in any consultation. To this Rev. Paik answered that the possibilities were greater in Taiwan than China, and that the boundaries for dialogue should be widened.

Ms. Suzuki called for a reappraisal of history by the Japanese people, as many have still not repented for their country's actions. Although many people welcome the fact that different religions are united in the quest for peace, the current climate of hostility toward North Korea makes it difficult for people to envisage that repentance is necessary.

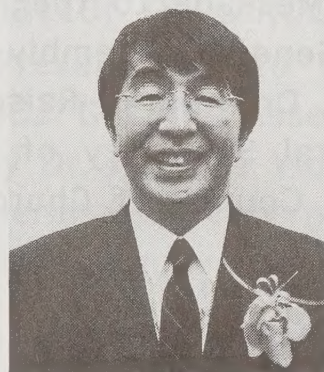
A Buddhist priest from the group Nihonzan Myohoji, observing the Assembly, said that he was moved by the activities of Christians toward creating peace, and expressed his intention to work alongside them in heartfelt action.

On the second day of the Assembly, a proposal for the structural reform of NCCJ was adopted unanimously, as were associated amendments to the bylaws. The proposal, produced by the Executive Committee, restructures NCCJ into four divisions: International Affairs, Theology and Mission, Mission Service, and General Affairs. Each division will have its own committee, and a divisional meeting will harmonize work in these four different areas. The Theology and Mission Division will be tasked with articulating theological issues in which NCCJ is active, while the General Affairs Division will raise awareness of the work of NCCJ and engage in fundraising.

Resolutions were also passed concerning activities to reform the Basic Law on Foreign Residents and to continue attempting to resolve the issue of the so-called "comfort women." Other resolutions covered the promotion of peace education based on the Constitution, overturning the Japanese government's current nuclear-dependent energy policy, prohibition of the use of all nuclear weapons including depleted-uranium ammunition, and demands that the Japanese government express opposition to any US-led attack on Iraq. All were adopted. (The text of the Assembly's demands to the United Nations and the US government may be found on pp. 6-7.)

NCCJ will continue its activities for the next three years on the theme of this year's General Assembly: "Toward Peace and Reconciliation - Overcoming Violence."

(Compiled from reports in Christ Weekly)



Rev. Toshimasa Yamamoto, the new General Secretary of NCCJ.

Letter to NCCJ's Friends and Supporters

Dear Friends in Christ,

Greetings from Tokyo!

This is to inform you that from April 1, 2003 we now have a new General Secretary at the National Christian Council in Japan.

Rev. Kenichi Otsu resigned from his position as the NCCJ General Secretary on March 31, 2003 after serving for nine years. We deeply appreciate Rev. Otsu's many years of service. He will continue to be at The Japan Christian Center building and serve as the Director of Christian Academy of Tokyo Area office.

We are happy to inform you that Rev. Toshimasa Yamamoto was elected as the new NCCJ General Secretary on March 10 at its 35th General Assembly held at Tokyo Lutheran Church and has already started in his new position on April 1, 2003. Many of you are already familiar with Rev. Yamamoto as he has been serving at NCCJ as the Executive Secretary for International Relations for the past 10 years. We look forward to continuing to work together.

Taking this opportunity, we would like to express our gratitude, on behalf of the NCCJ, for your cooperation and continuous support for our ecumenical ministry. We also look forward to your continued encouragement and prayers for our future ecumenical journey as well.

Peace and Grace,

Ms. Reiko Suzuki

Moderator

National Christian Council in Japan

Message to the NCCJ General Assembly from Rev. Dr. Konrad Raiser, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches

Geneva, 14 January 2003

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

On the occasion of 35th General Assembly of the National Christian Council in Japan I send warm greetings to you and all the participants as they come together in prayer and worship at the Tokyo Lutheran Church to consider the theme: "Towards Peace and Reconciliation – Overcoming Violence". With ominous war clouds looming on the horizon the theme is both appropriate and timely.

We live in times of violence when voices of peace are being drowned in the rhetoric of war. At this juncture in history it is imperative for Churches and Christians around the world to intensify their engagement in efforts for peace and reconciliation. It is through reconciliation that broken and unjust relations between communities and nations are restored. The Churches today are therefore called to this ministry of reconciliation, a difficult and costly process that requires courage and prophetic witness.

The current trend to resolve differences and dispute through recourse to military action must be discouraged and condemned unequivocally on ethical and theological grounds. The need of the hour is for Christians to become living witnesses to peace through prayer, worship and concrete involvement. As stewards of God's creation they are the hope of the future of His kingdom. They must also join with others to make people aware of the threats to peace and the danger posed by military violence.

The National Christian Council in Japan has an impeccable and distinguished record of working for peace and justice not only in Japan but also in Northeast Asia. When Churches in Japan advocate peace they do so having experienced the horrors of war. They have steadfastly opposed attempts to revise the "peace clause" in the Constitution. The National Christian Council in Japan has been consistent in its opposition to attempts by the authorities to distort the history of Japan's imperial past through the education system by re-writing text books. In recent times the Council has been involved in working with people of other faiths to fashion a new understanding of community. A community that is committed to overcome various forms of violence and promote a culture of peace and justice. All these endeavours indicate the Council's conviction that God has made us and all creation and it is our duty to seek

peace, justice and dignity for all His people.

On this auspicious occasion we take the opportunity to thank God for the constant witness of the Japanese Christians, characterised by their commitment to justice and peace. Assuring you of our continuous and unwavering support, we pray for the leadership of your Church. May they be inspired and strengthened by the Holy Spirit to be instruments of His witness for peace.



Word of Greeting to the 35th General Assembly from Rev. Martina Helmer-Pham Xuan, General Secretary for Asia, Australia and the Pacific in the EKD (Evangelical Church in Germany)

Hannover, 29 January 2003

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

We would like to send our warmest greetings from Präses Manfred Kock, chairman of the EKD Council and Bishop Rolf Koppe, chairman of the Department for overseas affairs of the EKD for your 25th General Assembly in Tokyo and we hope that your meeting will become a most fruitful one!

In the beginning of the year 2003 people all over the world are full of anxiety and uncertainty. Our small blue planet turned out to be a most vulnerable and fragile place for all people. It seems to become more than a necessary task for Christians all over the world that we are not only remembering and recalling the meaning of peace within our lives. We have to proclaim that peace is a true and untakable gift in our reality.

In Ephesians ch. 2, vv. 14 and 15 we are reminded:

"For Christ himself has brought us peace by making Jews

and Gentiles one people. With his own body he broke down the wall that separated them and kept them enemies. He abolished the Jewish Law with its commandments and rules, in order to create out of the two races one new people in union with himself, in this way making peace."

The Holy Scripture underlines very clearly that peace is the fruit of righteousness. In these days it seems that there are conflicts driving us apart, hidden interests, where one dominates the other due to economic interests or religious groups.

Peace — this is brought to us Christians in Asia, Europe, Australia and America as we are one people in Jesus Christ. And this peace is not only brought to Christians, but to all human beings whether they are Christian or Muslims or Hindus or Buddhists.

Peace in the biblical sense comprehends a wholeness. The blessing words: "Peace be with you!" are a prayer and a promise which is granted to every human being because of the overwhelming grace and mercy of our Lord. In these days we need to encourage each other in our longing for peace. This doesn't mean the solution of all conflicts, but the strong belonging to a community on the righting of wrongs.

It is one very clear and obvious mission statement of the NCCJ to stand in solidarity with people and partner churches throughout Asia and other parts of the world, always emphasising the deep issues of human rights, peace and justice.

The NCCJ has underlined a strong position for those who are disadvantaged and victimised. You gave a clear sign of the true meaning of Christianity in its best sense. In this sense the EKD (Evangelical Church in Germany) feels proud and honoured of having the privilege of being one of the partners of the NCCJ.

We hope that the challenges of our world with the multiple interests for the people in Asia will enable us to fulfill our common task: to become convincing peace workers for the Kingdom of our Lord.



"A Matter of *Oikoumene*" Presentation to the NCCJ General Assembly by Dr. Ahn Jae Woong General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia

Ecumenical Property

Perhaps the greatest achievement in church history since the Reformation in 1517 is the ecumenical movement. The whole concept of the ecumenical movement is for the church to proclaim the whole gospel to the whole world. But the way of proclamation should be different given that "doctrine divides, but action unites".

Nowadays, when we talk of the ecumenical movement, we have in mind the following: unity and renewal of churches; sharing of resources; solidarity and networking; providing leadership; upholding peace and justice; protecting human dignity and people's security; working for marginalized sections of society; love of God's creation.

In short, the task of the ecumenical movement is to protect this ecumenical property and proclaim the *oikoumene* in the context of the 21st century.

Ecumenical Horticulture

Ecumenical architecture is not enough. We need to re-invent an ecumenical horticulture which involves planting new seeds of *oikoumene*; watering a new spirit of *oikoumene*; fertilizing a new energy of *oikoumene*; nurturing new branches of *oikoumene*; harvesting new fruits of *oikoumene*.

Ecumenical horticulture should be concerned with the good life of the whole creation. It should be carried out with the good will of ecumenically-minded people and good habits of ecumenically committed people. A good society should be built upon the love of God and love of neighbors.

Japan's Over-Dependence on the West

In Japan, there is over-dependence upon the West. Two-fifths or 40 per cent of all Japanese exports go to the United States, and another 10 or 15 per cent go to Europe. According to an American saying, "Japan has tried to fly on one wing. Japan should fly on two wings".

Japan needs to be reconnected with the multi-ethnic, multi-

religious, multi-cultural reality of Asia. Inability to deal with that can lead to isolation. In fact, Japan's history is very much connected to the history of other Asian peoples. Yet, Japan's inability to deal properly with the past continues to haunt people in Japan as well as outside. This was clearly reflected in its dealings with the controversial history textbook and comfort women issues. Japan needs to go beyond its facing-saving activities and to deal with the roots of the issues.

Japan should learn to appreciate and accommodate all human values, including the need to live together with other Asian peoples as neighbors.

NCC Japan

The National Christian Council in Japan has through its history, life and ministry, provided symbolic ecumenical spaces such as the "Tozanso Process," "Okinawa for Heiwa Conference" and Kansai Academy House as a venue for North and South Korean gatherings and peace and security of North-east Asia meetings, among other things. It has also provided a temporary office in Osaka for the Christian Conference of Asia.

NCCJ has done a lot in sharing ecumenical leadership and resources, articulating ecumenical new thinking and theological exploration, making breakthroughs in ideological barriers, participating and being in solidarity with Asian people in their sufferings.

NCCJ should advocate for Japan to be a non-bellucose nation. Instead, Japan should promote an antiwar philosophy, and play the role of a peace campaigner, justice builder, and reconciler. NCCJ should be a key player in the ecumenical movement in the future.

Indeed, true selflessness will help build partnerships with all neighbors in our midst.

Demands Resolved by the NCCJ 35th General Assembly

To the United Nations

The National Christian Council in Japan, at its 35th General Assembly held on March 10 and 11 2003, demanded as peace-seeking Christians that the Japanese government should not support the US-led attack on Iraq. The demand below, demanding that the US and Japanese governments and the UN prohibit the use of all nuclear weapons, was also resolved.

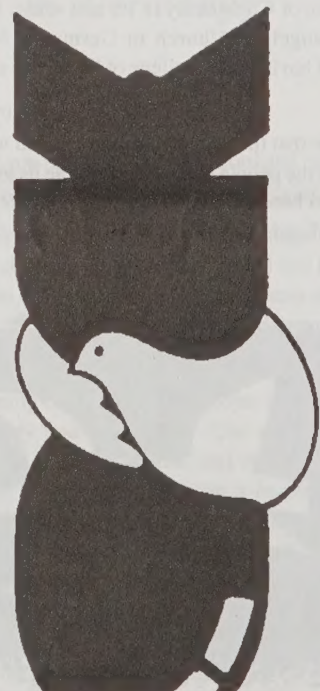
We demand that the UN pass a resolution prohibiting the use of depleted-uranium warheads and all nuclear weapons.

The USA is now embarked on a course of attack against Iraq, in defiance of the many voices raised by peace-loving people and the opposition of national representatives in the UN Security Council. It is probable that this attack on Iraq will make use of the latest weaponry, including depleted-uranium warheads.

The harm caused by depleted-uranium warheads used during the Gulf War is now evident twelve years later in the tragic diseases and deaths suffered by Iraqi children. Furthermore, the effect of the US attack on Afghanistan, launched in response to the events of 9/11, is now being seen in increased levels of radioactive contamination.

In addition, the US position of openly espousing the use of nuclear weapons offers an excuse for other nations that possess nuclear arms, including Israel, to use them, thus intensifying the crisis in the Middle East. The impact on other regions is also substantial. In particular, tension is rising between Pakistan and India, and the issue has also been raised of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's nuclear program. The hands on the "nuclear clock" have been moved forward by two minutes, and it is now only seven minutes to midnight and catastrophe.

In the midst of this crisis situation, it is the urgent task of the United Nations to work toward prohibiting the use of depleted-uranium warheads and all nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons kill multitudes of civilians in an instant, and their after-effects cause many years of suffering for the survivors. Not only this, but they have the irreversible effect of contami-



nating an entire area of land with radioactivity, irrespective of national boundaries. The voices of the people of Nevada, Micronesia, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, Tokaimura, Iraq and Afghanistan speak on behalf of the future of all of humanity and all of the earth's living creatures.

The UN has designated 2001-2010 as a Decade of Peace and Nonviolence. As one aspect of this, it should acknowledge the reality of the harm caused by depleted-uranium warheads and urgently prohibit their use, as well as that of all nuclear weapons.

To the United States Government

The National Christian Council in Japan, in its 35th General Assembly held on March 10 and 11, 2003, as believers that all people's lives are an irreplaceable gift from God, resolved to submit the following demand to the government of the United States, to request that it call a halt to the design and use of powerful weapons that kill civilians.

We demand that the US halt underground nuclear testing, sub-critical nuclear testing, the development of powerful ground-penetrating nuclear weapons, and the design of a missile defense system, as well as the use of depleted-uranium warheads and all nuclear weapons.

The US government is embarking on a course of attack against Iraq, ignoring the voices raised in opposition to war around the world. We are strongly opposed to the way in which this attack will rob Iraqi civilians of their lives and their security. The poor are already suffering from hunger and disease in an Iraq that has already spent years under economic sanctions, and the effect of the depleted-uranium warheads used during the Gulf War is now twelve years later causing tragic diseases and deaths among children. Jesus Christ taught that the life of even a single child must not be lost, and identified completely with the weak and suffering, to the point of giving his own life so that all of us might live.

The US is currently preparing to mount a full-scale attack

The Lord's Prayer in Arabic



on Iraq using all the latest weaponry. Living in north-east Asia, we are concerned that the next object of attack may be the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We fear that the refusal to rule out the use of nuclear weapons in the attack on Iraq may lead to the destruction of all nations on this planet.

In this situation, the US espouses the first use of nuclear weapons, and is hurrying to restart underground nuclear testing. Its actions, including continuing to design a missile defense system, unilaterally declaring the abolition of the ABM Treaty, with-

drawing from the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and allocating funds for powerful ground-penetrating nuclear missiles, all indicate an attitude promoting the use of nuclear weapons.

This US posture supporting the use of nuclear arms offers an excuse for other nations that possess nuclear weapons to use them. The use of nuclear weapons is now an issue in Israel, between India and Pakistan, and in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. As the first country in the world to use nuclear weapons against human beings, and one that has subsequently constantly continued their development, the US must be aware that it is plunging humanity into a nuclear crisis. The hands on the "nuclear clock" have been moved forward by two minutes, and now stand at only seven minutes to midnight and catastrophe.

We demand that the US now once again listen sincerely to the voices of the nuclear victims of Hiroshima, Nagasaki and elsewhere, eliminate its own nuclear weapons, and take the initiative as a world leader in pressing for the abolition of nuclear arms. The voices of the people of Nevada, Micronesia, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, Tokaimura, Iraq and Afghanistan speak on behalf of the future of all of humanity and all of the earth's living creatures.

The role the US should play as a world leader is not one of oppression by force, but rather of reconciliation and peace based on democracy. Conscious of this, the US should call a complete halt to the use of all nuclear weapons, including depleted-uranium warheads.

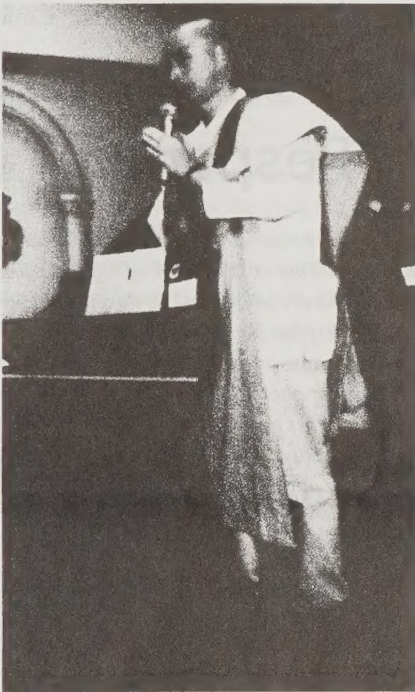
Party to Bid Farewell to Rev. Kenichi Otsu and Welcome Rev. Toshimasa Yamamoto as the New General Secretary of NCCJ



Left to right: Rev. Toshimasa Yamamoto (new General Secretary), Ms. Reiko Suzuki (Moderator), Rev. Tsutomu Shoji (former General Secretary), Rev. Kenichi Otsu (retiring General Secretary).



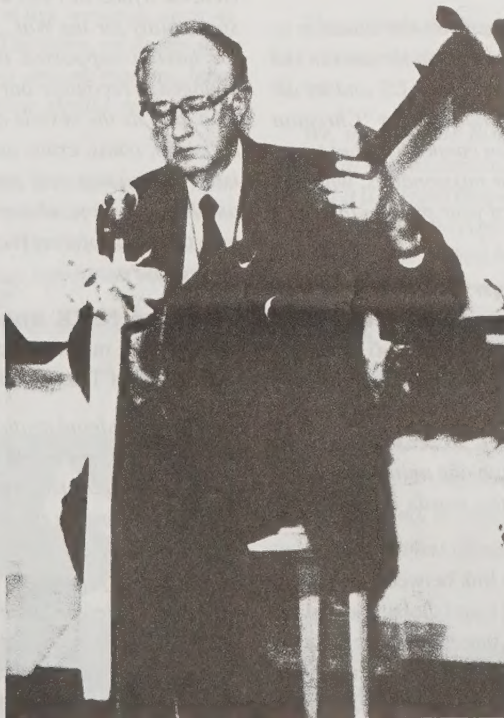
Rev. Yamamoto and Rev. Otsu with their spouses, Rev. Claudia Genung-Yamamoto (editor of JCAN) and Ms. Keiko Otsu (Director of HELP Asian Women's Shelter).



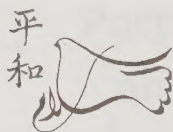
Rev. Takao Takeda, a Nihonzan Myouhouji Buddhist priest active in the Interfaith Network for Peace , offers a traditional Buddhist chant for peace.



Ms. Takako Doi, a Christian politician who is chair of the Socialist Party of Japan, brings greetings and flowers to Rev. Yamamoto and bids farewell to Rev. Otsu.



UMC missionary Rev. Gero Gish welcomes Rev. Yamamoto by playing the biwa, a traditional Japanese instrument .



War on Iraq: Christians in Japan Respond

One of the fundamental experiences underlying the faith of Japanese Christians is their history before and during World War II, when many churches openly or tacitly supported the militaristic government in its attempted subjugation of other Asian countries. A deep sense of remorse and repentance for this history has led to the consciousness that support for war and violence in any form is a sin that goes against every Gospel value, and that one of the primary duties of Christians is to speak out openly and do everything possible to prevent war.

Well before war began in Iraq, Japanese Christians were concerned at the direction in which the US and UK were moving, and issued statements and letters to world leaders requesting a peaceful solution to the situation. Many churches were deeply troubled that the countries which originally evangelized Japan, and to which they owed their existence as Japanese Christian churches, were now preparing to embark on a course that Japanese Christians viewed as deeply contradictory to the teachings of Christ. Rev. Nobuhisa Yamakita, Moderator of the United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyodan) sent an open letter to American Christians on February 13 in which he said:

The eyes of the world are now focused on the situation in Iraq. We are all anxious as the sense of crisis increases in the face of threatened military intervention by the US and its allies. People in Japan and elsewhere wonder at why "Christian America" is doing this. Such a situation cannot help but to reduce the impact of the witness of your missionaries, which is the fruit of their wonderful work and of your prayers in bringing the gospel to Japan.

We are aware of the fact that not everyone in America is in favor of this pending war, as we have heard of individual Christians and churches voicing their concern. It is our hope that you will increase your efforts to affect public opinion in the direction of a peaceful solution and towards changing President Bush's mind. We will continue to pray for you and your efforts. We pray that people of faith can unite in the Lord in a way that will bring reality to the words of our Lord, "Blessed are the peacemakers."

Many Japanese churches made the link between the terrorist attacks perpetrated on September 11 and global inequality, poverty, and discrimination, stressing that military aggression will do nothing to solve these problems and only increase the probability of further terrorism. Primate James Toru Uno of the Nippon Sei Ko Kai (Anglican/Episcopal Church in Japan) issued an open letter on Ash Wednesday (March 5), saying:

God created the whole world and especially he created all in his own image. This is a symbol of his love towards all people. Therefore God commanded us through Moses "Do not commit murder" (Exodus 20:18), and he prohibits us from killing each other because of his love for everybody. Therefore terrorism and war are both against God's will for they destroy life. We want to express our opinion that we are against terrorism and war of any kind and ask that the government of USA give up any plan to attack Iraq immediately.

[...]

It is believed that the cause of terrorism and war is the existence of injustice in the world; and unless this root cause is eliminated there will never be peace on earth. There can not be peace without justice. God has taught us (Matthew 5:9) "Happy are those who work for peace." Action towards justice by listening to and working for those who suffer from poverty, oppression, and discrimination because of injustice will bring peace. This is the true form of our faith. NSKK (Nippon Sei Ko Kai) has failed to work for justice and peace in the past but at General Synod in 1996 we accepted a statement admitting responsibility for the War. In this we confessed the NSKK's "sin for having supported the war." We pray that we will be changed to recognize our mission to do justice as the people of God, and as the vessels of peace, to listen to the voices of the divisions, pains, cries, and suffering of the world. Facing the issue of Iraq war now we need to raise our voice against war and listen to those who are suffering, especially people in Iraq with their fear of war. We also need to pray and take action for justice and peace.

Another NSKK Bishop, Jintaro Ueda of Tokyo, made a similar point in a statement released by the Peace and Justice Committee of Tokyo Diocese on February 28:

The US administration is suggesting that it use force to solve the present crisis in Iraq by deposing the regime of Saddam Hussein. However, this action will have the opposite effect of prolonging the chain of hate and violence that threatens to enflame the world. It will be completely ineffective in realizing the peace that all humanity should know. Lasting peace is founded on achieving justice. The fundamental resolution of poverty, racial discrimination, religious intolerance and other such issues is the first priority in achieving peace. Now is the time that international community should put all its resources, not into military preparations, but into the eradication of poverty, as well as making the greatest possible efforts toward correcting the unequal distribution of wealth and at-

taining justice and reconciliation between peoples.

The Free Methodist Church went further, seeing US motivation as control over oil reserves in the Middle East in a statement issued March 23:

The Bush administration terms its attack on Iraq a "just war," justifying this by claiming that Iraq has connections with Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations, and also threatens America by its possession of weapons of mass destruction such as nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. It aims to overthrow the government of Saddam Hussein and install a regime friendly to the USA.

However, its real goal is said to be control over Middle Eastern oil. It seems that the aim of this war is to place the oil production and reserves of the Middle East and Iraq, which rank first and second in the world, under US control.

[...]

We cannot remain silent while this manner of slaughter and destruction is perpetrated to further the interests of a superpower.

The Japan Baptist Union, in contrast, drew on the experience of the Japanese people as the only nation to have suffered from atomic bombing to plead for a diplomatic solution, in a letter sent to President Bush on March 10:

Being the only people in the world who suffered A-bombs, we strongly believe that mass destructive weapons such as nuclear bomb[s] must never be used. Therefore, we do not support the present regime of Iraq. At this present moment, however, we do not support that America should start a war against it, either.

You say that you must start an action to remove threat from the world. ... If America is to start the war, however, it is America who "does something" against the international community, and the "justice" you claim may leave your country.

[...]

Yes, there may be [a] "time" when we must fight (Eccl.

3:8). However, we do not believe that now is the "time." We sincerely ask that you will make every single effort to avoid the war by diplomatic means. We believe that is what God wants you to do as the true "super power" [that] wins respect from all over the world.

The Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church also stressed the necessity of learning from humanity's tragic history of war in a Declaration of Opposition to the Beginning of War on Iraq, issued March 18:

We believe that all life has been brought into being by our Creator, and is irreplaceably precious. We know that peace is indispensable to protecting this life. For this very reason, we strongly oppose all violent actions that result in loss of life, whether or not they are carried out by the state. We mourn the attacks of September 11, and have pressed for a fundamental resolution of the causes of such actions.

However, the present overwhelming US military attack will bring about the same tragedy suffered by the US, on a wide scale. Inspections in Iraq, and international pressure for it to dispose of weapons of mass destruction, have resulted in gradual progress, even if this has not been as fast as might have been hoped. We must continue our strong demands for disarmament and democratization throughout the world, centered on the work of the United Nations. This is the lesson humanity must learn from its tragic history, and the way forward indicated by international law.

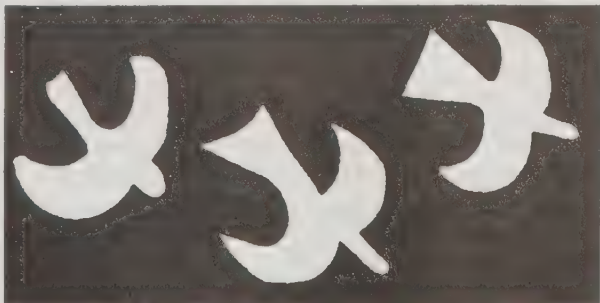
The Catholic Bishop's Conference of Japan went furthest in its February 21 statement indicating its complete opposition to all war:

We, the Catholic Bishops Conference of Japan, openly declare that our fundamental position is opposition to all war. At present it is alleged that military means are justified as a legitimate self-defense to cope with Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. Even if the United Nations should declare such a war to be legitimate self-defense, we oppose such a war. [...]

In addition, we call upon the government of Iraq to abolish weapons of mass destruction, to cease development of such weapons and to immediately and clearly prove to the world that it has done so.

Moreover, we strongly urge other states to do what we have asked Iraq to do, to completely destroy any and all nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction they have in their possession.

Japanese Christians will continue to protest military "solutions" to conflict situations, based on their deep conviction that justice and equality offer the only ways to bring about a genuinely peaceful world.



Japanese Baptist Pastor Acts as "Human Shield" in Iraq

Questions War and Criticizes "Pax Americana" in Baghdad

Reverend Koichi Kimura, a pastor of the Japan Baptist Convention (JBC), recently shared the story of his mission to Iraq, where he acted as a "human shield" against the recent US aggression in that country. Rev. Koichi spoke of his experience to an audience of more than 110 people who attended a meeting held in Tokyo on April 22.

Having been warned about President Bush's war agenda by one of his many Muslim friends in Indonesia, where he had taught theology for 17 years, Rev. Kimura decided to go to the Iraqi capital with the support of his church, "as an expression of [my] confession of faith" in order to "stand together with the weak and join hands with them" against the policy initiated by the American Christian Right and supported by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). The SBC originally supported the JBC until the former became conservative and fundamental.

"The occupation of Iraq by the United States has been done in such an irresponsible manner to civilians", he said. "Paul set [the] peace of Christ over against Pax Romana. Then what should we set over against Pax Americana?"

"Rev. Kimura told me that he had a deep and genuine spiritual experience of walking in the valley of death (Psalm 23) throughout his stay in Baghdad", said Rev. Kano Yoshitaka, another JBC pastor and a former vice-moderator of NCCJ, who chaired the meeting.

By Hisashi Yukimoto



Rev. Koichi Kimura speaks to the audience at Keisen Baptist Church in Tokyo on April 22 following his return from Baghdad.

We oppose the US attack on Iraq

Letter to President Bush from NCCJ

September 26, 2002

Dear President Bush:

We, as Christians in Japan, pray for peace in the world from the bottom of our hearts. We also sincerely pray that God will use us as an instrument of peace and reconciliation.

We join in your prayers and deeply mourn those victims of the September 11 attack. We share in the pain and grief of the bereaved families. At the same time, however, we also painfully remember with sadness that thousands of people in Afghanistan were killed by U.S. military strikes under the name of "War against terrorism" beginning on October 7th last year.

We believe that any use of violence at the moment will destroy God's creation - the creation which God said was "good" and will take human lives, which are created in the image of God. The violence only breeds more chains of violence and will not bring about peace and real solution to the problems.

On behalf of the National Christian Council in Japan, we declare, as time approaches toward the imminent danger of the attack, to oppose the US attack on Iraq that has been named as the "axis of evil," regardless of the fact that it would be a US unilateral attack or on the basis of UN resolutions. If the US begins to attack Iraq, as we have seen in Afghanistan, we can easily foresee that many civilians, such as women, children and aged people, will be victimized again. We know that many children in Iraq today have already died of illness and are suffering from starvation due to the lack of food, medicine and other basic daily needs caused by US sanctions imposed since the Persian Gulf War. And also, the US attack on Iraq will threaten peace and security in the Middle East region which would have an immeasurably adverse effect upon the world.

We pray and hope that the US will join people and other countries in the world seeking peace and reconciliation instead of acting as a police officer of the world from the standpoint of unilateralism.

We pray that you will change your policy of attacking Iraq and will patiently make an effort to dialogue, in order to bring about peace and reconciliation with Iraq. May God grant you courage and wisdom not to use violence as a means of solving these problems.

Sincerely,
Ms. Reiko Suzuki
Moderator
National Christian Council in Japan



Young Japanese Christians protest the US/UK attack on Iraq

Protests by NCCJ Peace and Nuclear Issues Committee

We Protest Against the War on Iraq!

March 20, 2003

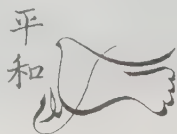
To George W. Bush, President of the USA

We strongly protest the unilateral attack begun today by the USA against Iraq. This attack is a reckless act that violates both the United Nations Charter and international law, which, far from bringing peace to the world, will destroy international peace and order. Countless ordinary people will be sacrificed, including children and the sick. As Christians, we strongly protest against the way you continually invoke the name of God to justify such slaughter. President Bush, this is the very time you should take heed of the Biblical injunction "Thou shalt not kill."

There is no time to delay. Please stop the attack immediately and seek a peaceful solution.

Ms. Kimiko Ogasawara

Chair, NCCJ Peace and Nuclear Issues Committee



Protest Declaration

March 24, 2003

To Junichiro Koizumi, Prime Minister of Japan

We strongly protest the support expressed by the Japanese government for the attack on Iraq begun on March 20.

This attack should be described as a baseless, unilateral massacre of ordinary civilians, and to support it can only mean being implicated in this massacre.

In addition, this attack is clearly in violation of the United Nations Charter and international law, and far from bringing peace to the world it undermines the basic premise of international peace and order.

This is nothing more than a unilateral preemptive attack, and your support completely and clearly violates Article 9 of the Constitution.

We demand that the Japanese Government immediately declare its lack of support for this attack on Iraq, and embark on diplomatic measures based on international law and the Japanese Constitution.

Ms. Kimiko Ogasawara

Chair, NCCJ Peace and Nuclear Issues Committee

We demand that you take back the plan for attack on Iraq

Letter to President Bush from the Interfaith Peace Network

November 27, 2002

Dear President Bush:

We deeply mourn those victims who were killed in the September 11 attack in NY. We also mourn those who lost their lives in the retaliatory war in Afghanistan.

It has been a little over a year since this incident and the start of the war. It became clear that violence does not bring any solution and can further aggravate the situation as well as victimize more innocent people. We are afraid that you, President Bush, will make a pre-emptive strike against Iraq on the pretext that Iraq is "backing terrorism" and "developing weapons of mass-destruction."

The United Nations Charter prohibits a country to use the armed force except in the case of self-defense when a country is attacked. It also prohibits a country to interfere in the domestic affairs of another country. The planned attack on Iraq by President Bush is a clear violation of the United Nations Charter. Furthermore, we are fearful and uneasy about the possibility of using nuclear weapons, which has been openly declared.

Many leaders of other nations have already expressed their opposition to attacking Iraq. We also hear that people of faith in the United States and citizens in New York or San Francisco along with others in different places in US have also been taking action and raising the voices against the attack. We ask you

to please listen to their voices. We, who are people of faith, affirm the dignity of life and adhere to the practice of "thou shall not kill". We are seeking peace, human rights and justice and have been acting with prayer for world peace in solidarity with people of faith inside and outside of Japan. We, who are people of faith, can no longer keep silent when we know that the tragic war in Afghanistan is about to be repeated again on this earth.

We, who are people of faith, strongly request with all our hearts that you should immediately take back the plan for attack on Iraq. This is our heartfelt plea and please accept the consciousness of the people of faith in Japan.

Sincerely,

Yukichi Ishikawa (Japan Religionists' Peace Conference)

Yoshinobu Ogawa (Christian Network for Peace - Sticking to the Peace Constitution)

Kenichi Otsu (National Christian Council in Japan)

Kenzo Kimura (Japan Catholic Council for Justice and Peace)

Sachie Monma (Japan Catholic Council for Justice and Peace)

Shincho Shigeta (NPO Ayus-Network of Buddhism Volunteer on International Cooperation)

Takao Takeda (Nipponzan Myohoji)

Hideo Ishi (Lotus Buddhism International Society)

Masahiro Kishida (Asian Buddhism conference for Peace Japan Center)

Eijo Yamato (The Religionist Association for Reviewing of Nuclear Power Policy)

representing the Interfaith Peace Network (IPN)

*Office: Nipponzan Myohoji, 8-7 Shinsen-cho Shibuya-ku
Tokyo 150-0045*

TEL 03-3461-9363 FAX 03-3461-9367



Participants in an interfaith demonstration against the war on Iraq pray for peace.

Promoting Peace in our Life and Work

The Church's Work for Peace, Nationally and Internationally

Presentation by Rev. Kenichi Otsu, then General Secretary of NCCJ, to the Kyodan-Related Missionary Conference
March 23, 2003

The theme I have been given today is also our common concern. Particularly at this time, the word "peace" has a very important meaning for us. We really need prayer to stop the war in Iraq and also to work as peacemakers. [...]

Today, "globalization" is a household word. However, it mainly implies the economic, political and military domination of the USA. There are a number of problems caused by globalization. Today we see a greater gap between the rich and poor than ever before. We need to face today's reality that the people in rich countries are living at the cost of poverty and suffering of people in poor countries and regions. According to the Human Development Report by UNDP published in 1994, the richest 20% of people hold 84% of the world's wealth, while the poorest 20% of people have only 1.4%. The rich consume 80% of the world's energy and 40% of the world's food. The poorest 18% are living below the poverty line. Most people who can be counted as rich are unaware of these realities.

I believe that this inequality between countries and regions was in part the background to the September 11 terrorist attacks on the USA. People in poor countries have been frustrated by the unfairness of reality. We should view September 11 in this way, and not only through the framework of terrorism. As long as we ignore the root causes of terrorism, we will never resolve the issues that lead to terrorist attacks.

We must look at issues in our respective areas and make efforts to resolve them in our individual capacities. And at the same time we must address the issues collectively as members of the global community and strive to resolve them working with people across the world.

The last NCCJ General Assembly had the theme, "Seek the Lord and Live," adapted from Amos 5:6. Amos pointed out that to worship God is to look at the reality of the poor. He says that even if people worship God, should they ignore the reality of the poor, God will not be there. This is a strong statement.

For Amos, to seek the Lord and live is to seek good and hate evil, through showing respect to others and ensuring justice and equality. God also calls us to pursue good and do justice in our own society. [...]

Japan in Asia

Rev. Harry Daniel, a great ecumenical leader in Asia, once said "Asia does not need Japan, but Japan needs Asia." He was right. Japan has pursued a western model of development and tried to identify with western countries rather than with our Asian neighbors. [...]

I had some experience in working with Asian churches when I worked with the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) from 1986 to 1994. At the beginning I assumed that we Asians can be united as one, if we only get to know each other well. Later I found that we have more differences in culture, language, religion, way of thinking and so on than we do similarities. This shows the richness of Asian diversity. We must respect each others' differences. Asian churches exist in this context. Therefore, we are looking for unity in diversity.

[...]

Japanese Militarization

The USA's self-centered policy is reflected in the current wave of Japanese militarization based on neo-nationalism. The national flag (hinomaru) and national anthem (Kimigayo) have been used to rekindle Japanese nationalism. Both Kimigayo and the hinomaru were symbols of the Japanese invasion of Asian countries, and are today being forced on students and teachers in public schools. Some teachers, especially some Christian teachers, have refused to use them on the grounds of their faith.

The Ministry of Education and Science approved a distorted history textbook in March 2001. This textbook omitted historical facts such as the existence of the so-called "comfort women," and minimizes the Nanking Massacre. The Japanese government and people are trying to close their eyes to past history, preferring to beautify Japan's history of invading Asian countries. An increasing number of Japanese people support the right wing. However, some parents, teachers and citizen's groups, including Christians, have protested the adoption of this distorted textbook by their local public schools, and many have been successful in stopping it.

Prime Minister Koizumi visited Yasukuni Shrine (the Shinto shrine where the spirits of Japan's war dead are venerated) in 2001, 2002 and this year, despite strong opposition both domestically and from neighboring countries such as China and South Korea. Yasukuni Shrine was the spiritual symbol of the Japanese invasions of Asia, and people in Korea and China still have painful memories of having been forced to worship the emperor as a god. I think the Prime Minister visited Yasukuni Shrine with the intention of revitalizing state Shinto ideology, strengthening nationalism and preparing Japan for the future deaths of Japanese soldiers in war. Today Japan has sent a military force to the Indian Ocean to support the US military operation in Afghanistan, despite public opposition. Now the Koizumi administration has drafted emergency legislation (war laws) to prepare for possible wars. Once this bill passes the Diet, it is bound to strengthen the military power of Japan and its military cooperation with the USA. This law poses a threat to neighboring countries.

Churches in Japan and their Mission Tasks

Christians in Japan are a tiny minority. Generally speaking, most Japanese are more inclined to pursue a material life than a spiritual one. Even though people go to Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines, most of them just pray for their own interests and families, not for others.

Japanese churches are also mirroring our society's trend towards conservatism. The basis of the ecumenical movement is the acknowledgement that the mission of the church is to address issues of people who are suffering in the pursuit of justice and peace, as well as issues of peace and justice themselves, while engaging in collective witness and service within our society. Nevertheless, our churches sometimes can be easily driven to isolating themselves from society and from people's reality as well. The ecumenical movement should serve the church, but that does not mean putting our heads in the sand and turning our eyes from the reality of the churches. Maintaining the tension between NCCJ and its members, we must pursue our common mission tasks.

These are:

Unity among member churches and organizations;

Peace and Justice concerns;

Human Rights concerns;

International Relations.

Toward a Just and Inclusive Community

We have still have to find common ground for the ecumenical agenda in Northeast Asia on issues such as relations between China and Taiwan, the reunification of South and North Korea, and Japan's militarization. We need to foster good in-

ternational relations and mutual understanding. In addition, we also need a mechanism by which to share our concerns and common actions.

Our region is affected by the US military presence. Okinawans are suffering, as they bear the burden of hosting 75% of the US bases in Japan. The Japan-US military alliance is built at the expense of the Okinawan people. Today they are feeling much pain, because warplanes and ships for the war on Iraq were dispatched from US bases in Okinawa. Okinawans feel guilty about this, and we must understand their sensitivity. For this reason, we feel it necessary to hold dialogue and share the concerns and agony of these people with churches in the USA.

Recently we have set up an ecumenical network called "Christian Network For Peace" consisting of those who are addressing peace issues at local and national levels. We have also established an "Interfaith Peace Network," consisting mainly of Buddhists and Christians. We hold prayer meetings among Christians and with people of other religions. In May 2002 we published a full-page advertisement in the Asahi Shimbun newspaper to express our opposition to the emergency laws and to promote the protection of the Peace Constitution, raising about \$100,000 from 4,000 people to pay for it. We also jointly organized peace rallies with civil groups and trade unions in Tokyo with 40,000 people on June 9 and 60,000 on June 16, 2002.

We have launched a campaign for the enactment of a "Basic Law for Foreign Residents in Japan" to bring about an equal and inclusive society for both Japanese and foreign residents. We are also working for the human rights of migrant workers and refugees in Japan.

Seeking Wider Ecumenism

Since we are only a tiny proportion of Japanese society, we really need to work with other religions and civil groups on peace, justice and environmental issues. Our Study Center for the Japanese Religions in Kyoto has provided a theological base for our inter-faith dialogue and cooperation. At the moment, the Japanese churches are not well aware of the necessity of working with other religions and civil groups. The Study Center in Kyoto offers programs of dialogue with different religions. In the course of learning about other religions, it is important to understand our differences and foster mutual respect, without which we cannot work together. In particular, we undertake joint action and prayers in the area of peace issues. For instance, after the September 11 attacks, we organized a prayer meeting with Buddhists in a temple in Tokyo. We prayed for the victims of the terrorist attacks on the US, and also for the victims of the US attacks in Afghanistan. We also prayed for a peaceful resolution. Later all the participants carried candles and flowers to the American Embassy in Tokyo and prayed together there. We wanted to send a message

as religious persons about the great importance of human life—all human life everywhere.

We have worked sincerely to build peace and reconciliation, but President Bush's war policy has undermined our efforts, and disseminated the culture of violence globally. We are called to be peacemakers. Our ecumenical task is to bring good news to the people. We are the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

We are looking for wider ecumenism in collaboration with other faiths and civil groups. I would like to repeat that inter-faith dialogue and cooperation are necessary for us since we are a minority in this society. We therefore need to develop our theological base for pursuing broader ecumenism.

[...]

I would like to conclude my presentation with some words from 2 Corinthians 13: 11-13.

"Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you."

Footnote

Over two-thirds of the missionaries gathered for the annual Kyodan-related Missionary Conference on March 22-24 supported the adoption of the following resolution, in response to the current military activity in the Middle East.

Resolution

As church-related Christian workers from various countries, we are appalled by the Bush administration's aggressive foreign policy, and hereby register our opposition to the unprovoked, unapproved, and illegal invasion of Iraq.

Recognizing that all people are created in the image of God, we call upon the U.S., the United Kingdom, and other coalition governments to end immediately all hostilities against the Iraqi people and the destruction of their country.

We further call upon all nations to pursue peace in the Middle East and elsewhere through cooperation with the United Nations. We will continue to work and pray for the development of a diplomatic approach that values reason and humanitarian concerns and rejects military force as a means for settling international disputes.



Overcoming Violence For a Chain of Joy

Fifty students and young people met at a YMCA facility in Gotemba to articulate a common vision for justice and peace at a three-day ecumenical consultation. The consultation began on March 20, the same day as the war in Iraq, and participants reflected on violent aspects within the Bible, the church, and their own communities. At the end of the conference, participants issued the following statement.

Mission Statement of the Third Ecumenical Conference for Students and Youth Movements in Japan

The Youth Committee of the National Christian Council in Japan (NCCJ), the Student Department of the Japan YMCA (Student YMCA), and the SCM Cooperative Committee (SCM) held their Third Ecumenical Conference on the theme "Just peace for overcoming violence" at Gotemba, Shizuoka, March 20-22, 2003. In preparation, these organizations had put into practice an action plan for the purpose of empowering students and youth which had been accepted at the Second Ecumenical Conference. This involved:

1. building a network for the ecumenical movement at the local level;
2. mutually supporting common issues and concerns among these organizations, and cooperating with them;
3. empowering young ecumenical leadership; and
4. creating solidarity with the concerns of Asian churches.

Since the Second Conference, the Youth Committee of NCCJ has taken responsibility for national ecumenical leadership training. During this process the tragedy of September 11 occurred, and US militarism created strong tension worldwide.

Following this, controversy arose over the portrayal of Japan's official war responsibility in a school history textbook. Moreover, the government was in a hurry to legalize a package of emergency legislation. Under these circumstances, the Youth Committee of NCCJ affirmed the need to educate young students and youth regarding Japan's war responsibility.

On March 20–23, 2002, the Youth Committee of NCCJ held a National Ecumenical Youth Training Program in Tokyo on the theme of "Pursuing the Truth for Peace with Justice."

The Youth Committee then continued its program, especially with young students and youth, through solidarity with church action in Asia and the Pacific region. Asia Youth Week, which has been reinvigorated by the Ecumenical Asia-Pacific Student and Youth Net (EASY-Net), was very impressed with Japanese young people's understanding of ecumenism in terms of justice and peace.

At the third Ecumenical Student and Youth Conference, participants were sensitized to ways they can overcome violence initiated by the militaristic tension in the Middle East under US hegemony. During the program, the US and UK initiated their military attack against Iraq, and the Japanese government officially announced its support for this attack based on the Security Treaty between Japan and the US. We, participants in the Conference, critically recognized that the behavior of those governments is the most vicious reality of violence.

In the Conference, we also learned the historical background of violence supported by US churches and the nature of violence in a biblical context. Further, we reviewed the brokenness of Japanese churches' being involved in the violence of Japanese history, and why the churches have kept silence even today.

We strongly reaffirmed that war is completely unjustified violence in terms of our life being a gift of our Creator God. Therefore we appeal for peace with justice, through halting

any military attack against Iraq as soon as possible. We also appeal to others to follow the new direction of our ecumenical movement toward peace and reconciliation in terms of a just peace, both domestically and internationally. Finally we stress our mission responsibility and the practice of mutual responsibility among ecumenical organizations in future.

Common Mission Tasks:



1. to practice peaceful action in our churches, regions, work places, and families to stop the military attack on Iraq by the US and the UK;

2. to step up our practical use of the youth mailing list and create a homepage to share the local action of youth and students in the ecumenical movement;

3. to strengthen the mission relationship between

the Youth Committee of NCCJ, the Student YMCA, and the SCM Cooperative Committees;

4. to hold a Second Ecumenical Youth Forum for young leadership training, initiated by the Youth Committee of NCCJ;

5. to hold the Fourth Ecumenical Student and Youth Conference in 2006

6. to strengthen a mission relationship for sharing information on the ecumenical youth movement through mutual understanding between the CCA, the WCC and the Japanese ecumenical youth network.

March 20, 2003

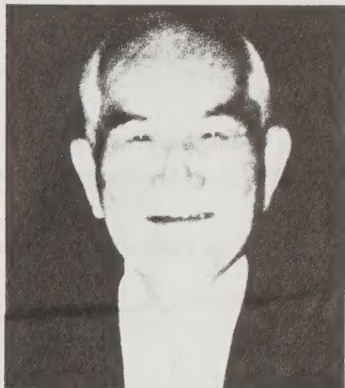
Conference Participants

Youth Committee of NCCJ

Student YMCA

SCM Cooperative Committee

Obituary: Professor Mikio Sumiya



Professor Mikio Sumiya, former Chair of the Executive Board of the NCCJ Center for Christian Response to Asian Issues (CCRAI, which closed in March 2001), died at a Tokyo hospital on February 22, 2003 at the age of 86. A memorial

service was held on March 1 at Tokyo Women's Christian University, of which he was president.

Professor Sumiya was a renowned labor economist at the University of Tokyo. During the 1990s, he acted as an arbitrator in a dispute between the central government and opponents of Narita airport.

A member of the United Church of Christ in Japan, Professor Sumiya was also known for his dedicated leadership of the ecumenical movement. He headed a number of Christian organizations, including the Japan Overseas Christian Medical Co-operative Service (JOCS) and the Asia Christian Education Fund (ACEF). He was also the author of many books, including *Kindai Nihon no Keisei to Kirisutokyo* (The Formation of Modern Japan and Christianity), and before his death was preparing a book describing his personal theology as a lay person.

By Hisashi Yukimoto

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NCC-J Calendar Highlights

2003

March

- 1 Memorial Service for Professor Mikio Sumiya (Former Chair of the Board of Directors of the NCCJ Center for Christian Response to Asian Issues)
- 8 Interfaith Rally in Hibiya Park to oppose the US/UK attack on Iraq organized by the Interfaith Peace Network
- 20 Joint study meeting by Peace and Nuclear Committee and Yasukuni Shrine Committee on Articles 9 and 20 of the Japanese Constitution
- 25 Funeral Service for Yayoi Matsui (ex-chair of the International Affairs Committee of the Christian Conference of Asia)

April

- 5 World Peace Now Peace Rally and Demonstration at Yoyogi Park
- 15-19 Peace Action in front of the Diet Building to oppose Emergency Legislation
- 21 Emergency Peace Action in front of the Diet Building and submission of letter of protest against the Emergency Legislation
- 24-26 Asian Solidarity Conference on Japanese Sex Slavery during WWII

May

- 16 Seminar on Refugees and Migrant Workers organized by the Christian Coalition on Refugees and Migrant Workers
- 23 Sayama Central Rally and Demonstration for Mr. Ishikawa (victim of buraku discrimination)

June

- 10 Rally at Meiji Park to Stop Emergency Legislation (attended by 5000 people)



Japanese cherry tree in full bloom



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